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LETTER DATED 3 DECEMBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CONGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to enclose herewith the text of the declaration of the summit meeting of heads of State and Government of the countries members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Brazzaville on 2 and 3 December 1996 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Daniel ABIBI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Declaration of the summit meeting of heads of State and Government of the countries members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Brazzaville on 2 and 3 December 1996

We, the heads of State and Government of the countries members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa:

The Republic of Angola
The Republic of Burundi
The Republic of Cameroon
The Central African Republic
The Republic of Chad
The Republic of the Congo
The Republic of Equatorial Guinea
The Gabonese Republic
The Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe
The Republic of Zaire

met in Brazzaville on 2 and 3 December 1996, and, having reviewed the serious problems concerned with peace and security in Central Africa, particularly the situation in the Great Lakes region,

I. GENERAL CONTEXT

1. Note with profound concern that the situation in the subregion as a whole not only continues to be very worrying, but has deteriorated in certain parts of the subregion since the last summit meeting of the Committee, held on 8 July 1996 in Yaoundé.

2. Express serious concern at the latest developments in the Great Lakes region, particularly in eastern Zaire and the Central African Republic.

3. Welcome the progress towards peace and national reconciliation in Angola and strongly encourage our Angolan brothers to resolve the military questions and embark as quickly as possible on the political phase, in accordance with the Lusaka Protocol and Security Council resolution 1075 (1996) of 11 October 1996, in order to consolidate the peace process and allow the Angolan people to direct their efforts towards the task of national reconstruction.

4. Strongly condemn the threat or use of force as a means of resolving problems either within or between States.

5. Deeply deplore the loss of so many human lives, the material damage and the indescribable suffering caused by armed conflicts in the subregion, which are generating millions of refugees and displaced persons, and express our deep

gratitude to the countries and peoples of the subregion for their generous and fraternal hospitality and welcome.

6. Recognize that our countries and our peoples are united by natural and historical bonds of fraternity and solidarity, and commit ourselves to the task of consolidating those bonds.

7. Welcome the recent signing by Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe and Zaire of the Non-Aggression Pact between Central African States, and invite all States members of the Committee that have not yet done so to sign it as soon as possible, insofar as the Pact is one of the most important measures of trust among the States in the subregion.

8. Reaffirm our pledge to use bilateral and multilateral consultative machinery for the settlement of inter-State disputes and to give priority to dialogue and consensus-seeking for the resolution of internal conflicts, in accordance with the common African tradition.

9. Also reaffirm our pledge to respect the fundamental principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), particularly:

(a) The sovereign equality of all States;

(b) Non-interference in the internal affairs of States;

(c) Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of every State;

(d) The peaceful settlement of disputes;

(e) The inviolability of internationally recognized borders.

10. Recognize the inalienable right of States to reaffirm the central authority of the State wherever it is threatened within internationally recognized borders.

11. Reaffirm the joint decision taken by member States to take a more active part in United Nations and OAU peace operations, particularly in the subregion.

Also reaffirm, in this connection, the decision to set up specialized peacekeeping units within our armed forces.

Request our bilateral and multilateral partners, with the support of the United Nations, to respond to the urgent requests for logistical equipment and training for the above-mentioned units.

12. Reiterate the urgent need for member States to set up, promote and support participatory systems of government and to promote human rights and the rule of law as means of preventing conflicts and ensuring the stability of States, and stress, in this respect, the need to organize workshops for the security forces

of member States in order to promote a culture of peace by redefining their role in a democratic context.

II. THE SITUATION IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

13. Stress the need for an integrated and comprehensive approach to the search for a lasting peace in the Great Lakes region, taking into account the complexity of the challenges facing this area of the subregion, particularly in the humanitarian, security-related and political fields.

Humanitarian questions

14. Express our dismay at the indecisiveness of the international community when faced with the suffering of our brothers in the Great Lakes region, and commit ourselves unreservedly to the task of intensifying our efforts to put an end to the humanitarian crisis affecting this part of the subregion of Central Africa.

15. Express our gratitude to the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire for accepting the majority of refugees from the Great Lakes region in their territory, and call for greater international assistance to be given directly to these countries and other countries offering asylum to help them to confront the economic, environmental and any other consequences of the massive influx of refugees in their territory.

16. Stress the need for consultation with the States of the Great Lakes region directly involved in humanitarian operations and also stress the benefits of strengthening cooperation on humanitarian questions amongst the members of the Standing Advisory Committee, by facilitating delivery of humanitarian assistance to the recipients and by involving the specialized units in peace operations.

17. Note the efforts being made by Burundi and Rwanda to receive and reintegrate refugees in conditions of security and dignity, and encourage those countries to continue such efforts.

18. Note the measures already taken by the Government of Burundi to restore the democratic process in that country, and take note of its commitment to expedite the creation of democratic institutions within a reasonable time-frame by giving priority to dialogue with the political class as a whole and all the segments of Burundian society.

19. Invite the States parties to the Arusha Accords to lift the embargo which has a greater effect on the Burundian people, especially the most vulnerable social classes.

Security questions

20. Are convinced that the uncontrolled proliferation of weapons and recourse to the use of force to settle differences are major contributing factors to the instability and tensions which dominate the Great Lakes region.

Encourage therefore all parties in Burundi to choose a form of mediation which guarantees objectivity and neutrality in order to move ahead in the peace process, in the interests of the people of Burundi.

The officers of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa will support such measures.

21. Strongly condemn any actions or measures which violate the territorial integrity of any State of the Great Lakes region, pursuant to resolution 16 of the first OAU summit meeting held in Cairo in 1964.

22. Stress the need for each State to create a truly republican army in order to guarantee stability, security and confidence within its territory, and call upon the bilateral and multilateral partners to support the stricken countries' efforts to restore the authority of the State.

Political questions

23. Maintain that true peace and security in this part of our subregion are based on establishing and consolidating democracy and participatory systems of government which take into account the specific nature of each State. With that in mind, we call on the countries members of the Committee to act as mediators between the parties involved, when asked to do so.

24. Consider that impunity is a threat to the peace and stability of States, and in that context invite all States to cooperate with the International Tribunal for Rwanda in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 955 (1994).

III. FOLLOW-UP MEASURES

25. Decide to give priority to monitoring the situation in the Great Lakes region and to consult regularly on developments with a view to finding peaceful solutions.

26. Request the officers of the Committee to take practical steps to establish the subregional early warning mechanism as a basic tool of preventive diplomacy in Central Africa and to submit a report to the heads of State and Government of the member countries by the end of June 1997.

27. Ask the ministers of defence and of the interior of the member States to hold an emergency joint meeting with a view to proposing practical measures for subregional cooperation in combating the uncontrolled proliferation of weapons and illegal drug trafficking, and also request the officers of the Committee to submit a report to the heads of State and Government.

28. Decide to convene a ministerial level subregional conference in February 1997 in Brazzaville on the question of "Democratic institutions and peace in Central Africa", and stress the importance of participation by all the States of the subregion at that conference.

29. Request the officers to contact the bilateral and multilateral partners to solicit their contributions to the Trust Fund established by the United Nations, for the purpose of giving a new impetus to the Committee's activities and to the implementation, as a priority, of the measures contained in this declaration.

30. Profoundly regret that at the dawn of the twenty-first century, when the world has so many opportunities for scientific and technological progress, full participation in that process by Africa in general and by the subregion in particular remains hampered by the growing number of conflicts and by political instability. In that context we reaffirm the primary responsibility incumbent upon every State to guarantee the security and well-being of its peoples, and stress the need to promote development through science as a means of preventing conflicts and ensuring the political stability of States.

31. Support the Central African Republic in its efforts, through the measures which it is taking within the framework of established democratic institutions, to restore peace, harmony and stability in that country.

32. Lastly, express our satisfaction with the climate of cordiality, understanding and fraternity which prevailed during the summit meeting.